

1 **VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD**  
2 **CITY OF LAS CRUCES**  
3 **May 25, 2021, at 9:00 a.m.**

4  
5 **MEMBERS PRESENT:** Karen Woods, UMW of Southwest, Chair  
6 Kyle Trout, Special Forces Association, Vice-Chair  
7 Ed Torres, American Legion Post 10  
8 Victor Eres, Marine Corps League  
9 Rod Gajewski, MOPH  
10 James (JR) Turner, Member at Large 1  
11 Hector Sanchez, Member at Large 2-Student  
12 Mike Cano, Member at Large 3  
13 Hubert L. Gay, Vietnam Veterans  
14 Sam Bothern, DAV Chapter 10

15  
16 **STAFF PRESENT:** Eric Enriquez, Assistant City Manager  
17 Larry Nichols, Director Community Development  
18 Sonya Delgado, Director Parks & Rec  
19 Audrianna Sambrano Administrative Assistant  
20 Cathy Matthews, Landscape Architect  
21 Franco Granillo, Parks Administrator

22  
23 **OTHERS PRESENT:** Dale Lawrence  
24 Sam Robert Jones  
25 Deborah O'Callaghan  
26 Gina McCue  
27 Jesus Morales  
28 Crystal Davis-Whited  
29 Desiree Javery  
30 Jay Lloyd  
31 John Poland  
32 Perry Ashby  
33 Anthony Martinez  
34 Dolores Archuleta

35  
36  
37 **I. CALL TO ORDER (9:11 a.m.):** Chair Woods called the meeting to order.

38  
39 **II. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:**

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41 a. There were no minutes to approve.

42  
43 **III. NEW BUSINESS:**

44  
45 a. **Veterans Court Update:** Mr. Enriquez stated that the Veterans Court did not  
46 reach out in time to the City of Las Cruces to receive funding for their program.

1 However, Mr. Enriquez has reached out to the City Manager and find funds. It  
2 is very important to the City, Community, and to the Veterans to know that  
3 funding will take place to support the Veterans Court.  
4

5 **b. Board Members Terms:** Mr. Enriquez stated that a proposal was sent and  
6 approved to the Mayor to extend the Board Members terms for an additional  
7 year. However, if anyone wishes to resign from their position on the Board may  
8 do so as well.  
9

10 **c. Memorial Candlelight Vigil:** Rod Gajewski stated that they were unable to  
11 have a vigil last year due to COVID. However, they were able to publish a full-  
12 page ad in The Bulletin listing all 204 names. Another ad will be published in  
13 The Bulletin this Friday, May 28, 2021, listing all 204 names. There will not be  
14 a ceremony this year, but they will be putting candles on the wall on Monday,  
15 May 31, 2021, in the evening. The candles will be picked up the following  
16 morning.  
17

18 **d. VA Clinic:** Crystal Davis-Whited stated that the clinic is offering the Johnson &  
19 Johnson COVID vaccines. They are taking walk-ins, but appointments are  
20 encouraged due to one nurse disbursing the vaccines. There have been some  
21 changes with providers. The new provider for Team 5 is Robert (inaudible), a  
22 new nurse practitioner Sakia, and for Team 4, Dr. Velasquez. Dr. Figen who  
23 has been selected for the position at the Northeast C-Bock. However, a start  
24 date has not been determined yet. Dr. Velasquez is currently out on leave, but  
25 Robert (inaudible) is covering now. Ms. Davis-Whited stated that to get a  
26 vaccine, you must be enrolled in the VA. Except for spouses and caregivers,  
27 there is a way they can go to myva.gov and enroll that way.  
28

29 **e. Veterans Park Monthly Report:** Sonya Delgado stated that there was a recent  
30 meeting with the VAD Board to discuss the parking lot. They are at about 95%  
31 with the design. The board has an opportunity to provide some comments and  
32 those will be sent out. Ms. Delgado stated that there will be a 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade,  
33 they need a Veteran Marshal. There will be two marshals, one will be a veteran  
34 and the other will be a healthcare worker behind the veteran. Ms. Delgado has  
35 asked City Administration to assist in finding someone. Mr. Granillo recognized  
36 two employees for keeping Veterans Park looking nice and well maintained.  
37

38 Cathy stated that she is working on getting the plans to the Chair to share with  
39 the rest of the board members. She also mentioned that physical progress has  
40 not started yet due to the project being five times the estimated budget due to  
41 the arroyo being an issue. Mr. Enriquez stated that staff is seeking additional  
42 funds, grants, etc. to get the project expedited.  
43

44 **f.**

45 **IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATON:**

- 1 a. Gina McCue with the Caregiver Support Group at the El Paso VA stated that  
2 the program she is in now supports the family member of the Veteran with  
3 education, training, and support and if they qualify, they have a stipend  
4 available for the caregiver. Ms. McCue stated that they are looking into having  
5 outreach events. Jesus Morales stated that he is a social worker, and they  
6 work hand in hand with Las Cruces as well, so they are available.  
7  
8 b. Deborah O'Callaghan, the new Director for the Las Cruces Vet Center stated  
9 that they would like to collaborate with community about programs that are  
10 being offered to the Veterans. She also wanted to congratulate Jesus on  
11 passing his boards and became a full Psychiatrist.  
12  
13 c. Sam Jones, Outreach Specialist for the Las Cruces Vet Center stated that he  
14 runs the mobile unit and would like to participate in the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade and  
15 any other outreach event, to notify his director. The event must be a nonprofit  
16 event. He also stated that he is trying to get the Vietnam wall replicate down  
17 to Las Cruces in about a year with a lot of coordination.  
18  
19 d. Mr. Gay stated that they are going to have a dedication for two new  
20 monuments, the Gold Star, and the Hall of Fame, on Saturday, May 29, 2021,  
21 at 10:00 a.m. They also have a new monument coming in, one for the Afghan,  
22 Iraq member with an approved spot. Mr. Gay also stated that there is an  
23 upcoming car show on June 5<sup>th</sup>.  
24  
25 Chair Woods stated that they need the monuments on the next agenda for  
26 approval.  
27  
28 e. Ms. (inaudible) with (inaudible) spoke about helping Veterans that have been  
29 deported get the medical help they need. Once they get deported, they lose  
30 their VA benefits.  
31  
32 f. Anthony Martinez with the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association stated  
33 that their mission is to raise funds to help Veterans. They also assist with  
34 building ramps for homes for the Veterans when needed.  
35  
36 g. (inaudible) asked if there is any thought about putting in a left turn lane to  
37 enter the park instead of the U-Turn, which is difficult for motorcycles to make  
38 that turn.  
39  
40

41 **V. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS:**

- 42 a. Ed Torres, American Legion Post 10 stated that on Sunday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021,  
43 at 7:00 a.m., they will be getting together to take pictures with their flags and  
44 a brief ceremony starting at 8:00 a.m., at St. Genevieve's to put fags on the  
45 Veterans graves. The flags will be picked up on Tuesday morning. Mr. Torres  
46 also stated that they have over 100 food boxes a week available for pick up

1 or delivery. Mr. Torres introduced John (inaudible) as the (inaudible), he got  
2 elected a few weeks ago and will be going to the post, they will be in good  
3 hands. They are hoping to re-open the post soon.  
4

5 Mr. Torres handed in his resignation letter from the Board to Chair Woods  
6 and stated that for John to take his place, he needed to resign. John will be  
7 the leading commander for the Post.  
8

- 9 b. Mr. Enriquez City of Las Cruces Assistant City Manager introduced the City  
10 of Las Cruces Community Development Director, Larry Nichols to the Board.  
11 c. Rick Rivera stated that it is his second week on the job, and he is taking over  
12 for Joe Martinez. He represents the Veterans Liaison for Congressmen  
13 (inaudible). Mr. Rivera is looking forward to learning about all the  
14 organizations and get everyone connected. Rod Gajewski requested for the  
15 Board to get Mr. Rivera's information to get in touch.  
16  
17 d. Hector Sanchez, with Military and Veteran Program from NMSU stated that  
18 the university will be back on campus starting August 7, 2021. Mr. Sanchez  
19 stated that NMSU has a dedicated computer lab for Veterans to and share  
20 their experiences, etc. There was 56 Veterans that graduated for the Spring  
21 2021 semester with bachelors, some with their master's degrees, and one  
22 with a Ph.D. Mr. Sanchez stated that his job is to help Veteran's transition  
23 from the military to civilian world. In August they will be doing a welcome back  
24 picnic for the Veterans following CDC regulations. All Veterans are welcome.  
25  
26 e. Rod Gajewski stated that the Purple Heart will have a meeting at Veterans  
27 Park on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021, for the first time. He mentioned that they have lost  
28 three members and it is important for people to understand that the VA does  
29 a great job at sending Veterans to the El Paso Civilian Group.  
30  
31 f. Victor Eres with the Marine Corps League stated that he is taking over for  
32 Carol Gaines.  
33  
34 g. Chair Woods stated that they are trying to get a headstone for a Union Civil  
35 War Veteran that has never had one. They are also working on trying to clean  
36 up the cemetery on of Dona Ana Road. They will also be going with  
37 participants from VFW 16719 to the Organ Mountain Cemetery to clean it up.  
38  
39 h. Dolores Archuleta asked when the statues were going to be put back. Ms.  
40 Delgado stated that there were electrical issues and they needed to process  
41 a change order and once that is done, they will bring the statues back.  
42  
43 i. Mr. Enriquez stated that City Hall is still closed for public meetings but will be  
44 reopening in July. The next meeting will be on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, the location hasn't  
45 been determined yet.  
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**VI. ADJOURNMENT (10:00 a.m.):** Motion to adjourn by Board Member Hubert Gay,  
seconded by Board Member Rod Gajewski. Motion passes

*Faun Woods*

Chairperson

*September 21, 2024*

Date